

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 06 COLOMBO 000003

SIPDIS

AIDAC

STATE FOR SA

BANGKOK FOR OFDA TOM DOLAN

GENEVA FOR UNOCHA AND IFRC NANCE KYLOH

ROME PASS FODAG

USAID FOR DCHA GREG GOTTLIEB, DCHA/OFDA MICHAEL MARX
AND ROB THAYER, DCHA/FFP, DCHA/OTI, ANE/AA BERNADETTE
BUNDY

E.O.12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [AEMR](#) [CE](#)

SUBJECT: TFX001 - SRI LANKA TSUNAMI FINDINGS OF
USAID/OFDA RAPID ASSESSMENT MISSION ALONG COASTAL
DISTRICTS

SUMMARY

11. SUMMARY: USAID/DART ASSESSMENT TEAMS HAVE
COMPLETED ASSESSMENTS OF DAMAGE IN GALLE AND
HAMBANTOTA DISTRICTS OF SRI LANKA, IN COORDINATION
WITH A UNOCHA-FACILITATED ASSESSMENT IN NINE TSUNAMI
AFFECTED DISTRICTS CIRCLING THE COAST. IN BOTH
DISTRICTS, ASSESSMENT TEAMS OBSERVED SIGNIFICANT
DAMAGE AND DESTRUCTION OF STRUCTURES ALONG THE COAST
AND UP TO 1-KILOMETER INLAND. SRI LANKA GOVERNMENT
REPORTS AS OF 12/31/04, 1900 HRS OVER 3724 REGISTERED
DEATHS AND 44582 PEOPLE DISPLACED IN GALLE DISTRICT.
HAMBANTOTA DISTRICT REPORTS OVER 4500 REGISTERED
DEATHS AND 32897 PEOPLE DISPLACED. DISPLACED
POPULATIONS ARE CURRENTLY STAYING IN OVER 250 RELIEF
CENTERS IN THE TWO DISTRICTS. LOCALLY ORGANIZED
DISTRIBUTION EFFORTS ARE MEETING THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS
OF THE AFFECTED POPULATED FOR FOOD, WATER, AND MEDICAL
SUPPLIES; THOUGH THE GREATEST REPORTED UNMET NEEDS ARE
LACK OF SHELTERING MATERIALS AND GROSSLY INSUFFICIENT
SANITATION FACILITIES. URGENT ACTION IS REQUIRED TO
ESTABLISH BASIC SANITATION SERVICES IN THE HUNDREDS OF
RELIEF CENTERS IN ORDER TO PREVENT DISEASE OUTBREAKS.
END SUMMARY

GALLE DISTRICT FINDINGS

12. AT THE TIME OF ASSESSMENT, LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN
GALLE DISTRICT HAD NOT UNDERTAKEN A COMPREHENSIVE
DAMAGE ASSESSMENT OF STRUCTURES. HOWEVER, THOUSANDS
OF SINGLE FAMILY HOMES, GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS, AND
PRIVATE BUSINESSES HAVE BEEN TOTALLY DESTROYED OR
SUFFERED MAJOR STRUCTURAL DAMAGE. THE GALLE TOWN
MATERNITY HOSPITAL WAS GUTTED BY THE TSUNAMI WAVES AND
HAS BEEN CLOSED FOR OPERATIONS. LOCAL GOVERNMENT
OFFICIALS REPORT OVER 42000 PEOPLE (ESTIMATED 8400
FAMILIES) HAVE BEEN DISPLACED BY DESTRUCTION OF THEIR
HOMES AND ARE CURRENTLY RESIDENT IN 160 LOCAL RELIEF
CENTERS (PRIMARILY TEMPLES, MOSQUES, CHURCHES, SCHOOLS
AND OTHER FACILITIES). THE TRANSPORTATION
INFRASTRUCTURE SUFFERED MAJOR DAMAGE, WITH COMPLETE
BRIDGE DISRUPTION IN THREE LOCATIONS AND TOTAL
DESTRUCTION OF THE RAILROAD LINES ALONG MORE THAN 50
KILOMETERS. A FULLY LOADED PASSENGER TRAIN WAS STRUCK
BY THE TSUNAMI WAVES NEAR HIKKADUWA TOWN, THROWING THE
TRAIN OVER 100 METERS FROM THE TRACK AND KILLING OVER
800 PASSENGERS. MOST OF THE LOCAL GALLE COASTAL
POPULATION ARE FISHERMEN, AND THEY HAVE SUFFERED
SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC LOSS OF FISHING BOATS, NETS AND
OTHER MATERIALS. HUNDREDS OF BOATS AND TRAWLERS CAN
BE OBSERVED ON THE LAND, MANY WITH ONLY MINOR DAMAGE,
BUT OTHERS TOTALLY DESTROYED.

13. A SIGNIFICANT OUTPOURING OF LOCALLY ORGANIZED AID
SUPPLIES IS CURRENTLY REACHING AFFECTED PEOPLE IN
GALLE DISTRICT, THOUGH THERE IS GENERAL LACK OF
ORGANIZATION LEADING TO DUPLICATION AND GAPS OF
COVERAGE. THE ASSESSMENT TEAM OBSERVED NUMEROUS LOCAL
AGENCIES AND SRI LANKAN CITIZENS COLLECTING AND
DISTRIBUTING CLOTHING, WATER, NON-STANDARDIZED FOOD
PARCELS, AND MEDICINES TO PEOPLE ALONG THE COASTAL
HIGHWAY AND AT RELIEF CENTERS. THERE ARE ALSO
NUMEROUS LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL MEDICAL TEAMS DRIVING
AROUND THE DISTRICT STOPPING AT RELIEF CENTERS
PROVIDING MEDICINES AND ASSISTANCE. ACCORDING TO THE

DISTRICT HEALTH OFFICIALS, THERE IS SUFFICIENT MEDICAL ASSISTANCE AND SUPPLY OF MEDICINES TO COVER THE NEEDS OF BOTH EMERGENCY AND CHRONIC PATIENTS AT THIS TIME.

14. THE LOCAL GALLE GOVERNMENT APPEARED TO BE EXTREMELY HARD AT WORK TO RESPOND TO THIS CRISIS, THOUGH THEY DO NOT SEEM TO BE CAPABLE OF ENFORCING A STRUCTURE TO COORDINATE ALL THE VARIOUS AID RESOURCES AND INTERESTS THAT ARE FLOODING IN. DURING THE USAID ASSESSMENT VISIT, THE SENIOR GOVERNMENT AGENT AND OTHER HIGH LEVEL OFFICIALS WERE TAKING CONSIDERABLE TIME ARGUING OVER MICRO-LEVEL DECISIONS, RATHER THAN DELEGATING SUCH MATTERS.

HAMBANTOTA DISTRICT FINDINGS

15. IN HAMBANTOTA DISTRICT, ALL FOUR DIVISIONS WITH COASTAL BORDERS WERE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTED BY THE TSUNAMI. INITIAL REPORTS TAKEN FROM THE FOUR

SIPDIS

DIVISIONS (HAMBANTOTA, AMBALANTOTA, TISSAMAHARAMA, AND TANGALLA) ESTIMATE THAT OVER 6000 STRUCTURES HAVE BEEN DESTROYED AFFECTING MORE THAN 80,000 PEOPLE (17,000 FAMILIES). THE AREA HARDEST HIT IN THE DISTRICT WAS HAMBANTOTA TOWN DUE IN LARGE PART TO ITS PROXIMITY TO THE COAST AND ITS LOW ELEVATION, A SIGNIFICANT PORTION OF WHICH LIES NEAR SEA LEVEL. MANY OF THE DEATHS IN THE TOWN RESULTED FROM THE TSUNAMI ENGULFING A LARGE CONCENTRATION OF PEOPLE NEAR THE TOWN'S COAST WHERE AN ESTIMATED 2500 PEOPLE HAD GATHERED FOR THE SUNDAY MARKET. OVER 28,000 DISPLACED PEOPLE ARE CURRENTLY LIVING IN 38 RELIEF CENTERS ESTABLISHED IN TEMPLES, SCHOOLS, CHURCHES AND MOSQUES, AND OTHER CLEARED AREAS THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT.

16. THE COASTAL HIGHWAY CONNECTING THE SOUTHERN PORTION OF THE DISTRICT SUFFERED MINOR DAMAGE. HOWEVER, VEHICLE ACCESS TO SOME OF THE AFFECTED AREAS IS LIMITED DUE TO DAMAGE TO THE DIRT PACKED FEEDER ROADS RUNNING TO THE COAST. THE VAST MAJORITY OF VILLAGES AND TOWNS ALONG THE COAST WERE ENGAGED IN SOME FORM OF FISHING ACTIVITY AS THEIR MAIN LIVELIHOOD, MANY OF WHOM LIVED ON A SUBSISTENCE BASIS. LOSS OF BOATS, NETS, AND OTHER FISHING EQUIPMENT DUE TO THE DISASTER WAS SEVERE LEAVING THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WITHOUT SELF-SUSTAINING MEANS.

17. DUE TO THE GEOGRAPHICALLY CONFINED NATURE OF THE DISASTER (AVERAGE OF 1 KM ALONG THE COAST), THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF THE COASTAL ZONE AS WELL AS MANY ORGANIZATIONS IN THE AREA HAVE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN RETRIEVAL, CLEAN-UP AND SALVAGE OPERATIONS, AND HAVE DONATED SUBSTANTIAL AMOUNTS OF FOOD, CLOTHES, MEDICINES, AND OTHER NON-FOOD ITEMS. ACCORDING TO DIVISION OFFICIALS, MOST OF THE DONATIONS ARE BEING MADE DIRECTLY TO AFFECTED DIVISIONS RATHER THAN GOING THROUGH A CENTRAL COORDINATION CENTER. THE ASSESSMENT TEAM OBSERVED MANY DONATIONS BEING MADE FROM PRIVATE VEHICLES DIRECTLY TO GROUPS OF PEOPLE LINING UP ALONG THE COASTAL HIGHWAY. DESPITE THE SIGNIFICANT OUTPOURING OF PRIVATE SUPPORT, LACK OF COORDINATION HAS RESULTED IN SHORTAGES OF SERVICE AND SUPPLIES TO SOME RELIEF CENTERS.

18. THE LARGE VOLUME OF ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE RELIEF EFFORT IN THE DISTRICT HAS SEVERELY STRESSED LOCAL GOVERNMENT CAPACITIES. LOCAL GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO COMMUNICATE AND COORDINATE WITH THOSE ENGAGING IN RELIEF EFFORTS HAVE BEEN HAMPERED BY A LACK OF RELIABLE SOURCE OF ELECTRICITY AND POOR TELEPHONE SERVICE TO HAMBANTOTA TOWN AND THE DISTRICT SECRETARY'S OFFICE. THE DISTRICT'S ABILITY TO COPE

SIPDIS

WITH THE EXPECTED INFLUX OF INTERNATIONAL RELIEF WITHOUT IMPROVEMENT IN MANAGEMENT CAPACITY AND FACILITIES IS CAUSE FOR SOME CONCERN.

COMMONALITY OF NEEDS IN AFFECTED AREAS

19. IT IS CLEAR FROM REPORTS AND OBSERVATION THAT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF SINGLE FAMILY HOMES SITUATED ALONG THE COAST UP TO ONE KILOMETER INLAND, PRIMARILY OF BRICK AND MORTAR CONSTRUCTION, HAVE BEEN TOTALLY DESTROYED OR SUFFERED MAJOR DAMAGE AND ARE NOT LIVEABLE. THOUSANDS OF OTHER HOMES HAVE SUFFERED MINOR TO MODERATE DAMAGE. NUMEROUS GOVERNMENT FACILITIES HAVE RECEIVED MAJOR DAMAGE. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND LOCAL POPULATION HAS BEEN PRIMARILY FOCUSED ON RECOVERY OF BODIES AND CLEARANCE OF MAJOR DEBRIS IN THE DAYS FOLLOWING THE TSUNAMI. MOST DISPLACED PEOPLE ARE

CURRENTLY MAKING EFFORTS TO ASSESS THEIR DAMAGE, CLEAN UP, AND RESTORE THEIR RESIDENCES WHERE POSSIBLE. THOSE WHO SUFFERED TOTAL DESTRUCTION OF THEIR HOMES ARE CURRENTLY STAYING AT LOCAL RELIEF CENTERS, PRIMARILY PLACES OF WORSHIP AND GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS. AT THESE CENTERS, THEY ARE RECEIVING AN OUTPOURING OF ASSISTANCE FROM THE LOCAL COMMUNITY IN THE FORM OF FOOD, WATER, CLOTHING, MEDICINES, SANITARY SUPPLIES AND OTHER ITEMS. THIS AID IS MEETING MUCH OF THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS, HOWEVER THIS AID IS SO FAR NOT CONSISTANTLY APPLIED AND IS NOT BEING COORDINATED, SO THERE IS CONSIDERABLE DUPLICATION IN SOME EASILY ACCESSIBLE AREAS, AND GAPS IN COVERAGE IN OTHERS. IN GENERAL, IT IS OBSERVED BY THE ASSESSMENT TEAMS THAT THESE RELIEF CENTERS DO NOT HAVE ADEQUATE TOILETS, WASHING AREAS, AND OTHER SANITATION SYSTEMS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE DISPLACED POPULATION AND TO PREVENT THE POTENTIAL SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

HEALTH SECTOR

¶10. IN THE TWO DISTRICTS VISITED BY THE ASSESSMENT TEAMS, IT WAS REPORTED BY HEALTH OFFICIALS THAT CURRENT EMERGENCY AND CHRONIC HEALTH NEEDS ARE BEING MET BY EXISTING AND VOLUNTEER MEDICAL PERSONAL. THERE HAVE BEEN CONSIDERABLE DONATIONS OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES, WHICH MAY IN FACT HAVE ALREADY REACHED THE LEVEL OF OVERSUPPLY. DOCTORS ARE NOT YET REPORTING CASES OF DIAHHREAL DISEASE, THOUGH THERE ARE REPORTED CASES OF CHEST AND OTHER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS. MANY PEOPLE WHO SURVIVED THE TSUNAMI SUFFERED CUTS AND OTHER LACERATIONS, WHICH HAVE INFECTION POTENTIAL DUE TO THE GENERAL UNSANITARY CONDITIONS AROUND. DOCTORS EXPRESSED CONCERNS ABOUT POTENTIAL OCCURRENCE OF MALARIA AND DENGUE FEVER, WHICH ARE ENDEMIC IN SRI LANKA, AS WELL AS POTENTIAL OCCURRENCE OF DIAHHREAL DISEASE, ARI, AND CHICKEN POX OUTBREAKS.

WATER/SANITATION SECTOR

¶11. ALL ALONG THE COASTLINE THERE ARE POCKETS OF STAGNANT WATER WHICH WAS NOT EVACUATED BACK TO THE SEA DURING THE TSUNAMI. SOME OF THESE WATER POCKETS HAVE HAD HUMAN CORPSES AND DEAD ANIMALS. MOST OF THE COASTAL POPULATION HAVE WELLS FOR DRINKING WATER, 100% OF WHICH HAVE BEEN CONTAMINATED WITH SEA WATER WITHIN THE AFFECTED ZONE. WELLS INLAND HAVE NOT BEEN CONTAMINATED AND ARE THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF DRINKING WATER CURRENTLY. LOCAL WATER OFFICIALS REPORT THAT THERE ARE SUFFICIENT SOURCES OF WATER IN THE GROUND AQUIFER AND IN RESERVOIRS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE AFFECTED AND NON-AFFECTED POPULATIONS, THOUGH SOME OF THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY WATER PIPES HAVE BEEN DAMAGED OR DESTROYED.

¶12. DRINKING WATER IS CURRENTLY BEING PROVIDED BY THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT THROUGH WATER TRUCKS, THOUGH ONE OFFICIAL QUOTED THAT THE EXISTING RESOURCE OF TRUCKS AND TANKS IS ONLY ONE-TENTH OF THE REQUIREMENT. OTHER WATER DISTRIBUTION IS BEING CONDUCTED BY PRIVATE AGENCIES AND CITIZENS, THOUGH ON AN AD HOC BASIS. IT IS APPARENT THAT SYSTEMATIC WATER DISTRIBUTION IS A REQUIREMENT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE DISPLACED POPULATION FOR THE COMING 2-3 MONTHS.

¶13. THE SANITATION SITUATION IN MOST OF THE RELIEF CENTERS IS A CAUSE FOR CONCERN. MOST OF THE CENTERS, WHICH ARE HOSTING 300 TO OVER 1000 PEOPLE NIGHTLY, HAVE ONLY 1-3 TOILETS. MOST PEOPLE ARE REPORTED USING OPEN LAND OR FOREST FOR DEFECATION. ADDITIONALLY, MOST OF THE CENTERS DO NOT HAVE EXPERIENCE IN CAMP OR PUBLIC HEALTH MANAGEMENT AND AS SUCH HAVE NOT ESTABLISHED SEPERATED AREAS FOR COOKING, CLEANING, AND SLEEPING.

FOOD SECTOR

¶14. ALONG THE COASTAL STRIP, THERE IS NOT SIGNIFICANT AGRICULTURAL ACTIVITY IN TERMS OF PLANTING AND HARVESTING - THESE ACTIVITIES ARE CONDUCTED FURTHER INLAND. AS SUCH, PEOPLE HAVE NOT LOST LOCALLY AVAILABLE PRODUCTION. HOWEVER, LOCAL FOOD STORES HAVE ALSO BEEN DAMAGED AND DESTROYED. THE SURVIVING POPULATION IS CURRENTLY DEPENDING UPON FOOD PROVIDED BY NEAR COASTAL RESIDENTS WHO WERE NOT AFFECTED AND BY FOOD DONATIONS FROM AGENCIES AND PRIVATE RESIDENCES. THE GOVERNMENT REPORTS IT HAS BEGUN FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAM HAS DISTRIBUTED EXISTING STOCKS FROM ITS MAIN WAREHOUSE TO DISTRICT GOVERNMENTS. AS OF THE TIME OF REPORTING, THIS FOOD HAD NOT REACHED THE AFFECTED POPULATION ASSESSED.

LOCAL AFFECTED PEOPLE REPORT THAT FOOD SUPPLIES ARE EXTREMELY LIMITED, PERHAPS COVERING ONLY THE NEXT FEW DAYS.

LIVELIHOODS

15. THE LIVELIHOODS AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF THE COASTAL RESIDENTS HAS BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY DISRUPTED. MUCH OF THE FISHING FLEET HAS BEEN DAMAGED OR DESTROYED, ALONG WITH NETS AND OTHER MATERIALS. NEARLY ALL THE TOURIST HOTELS, RESTAURANTS, AND OTHER SERVICES HAVE RECEIVED DAMAGE, AND NEARLY 100% OF FOREIGN TOURISTS HAVE BY NOW LEFT THE COASTAL AREAS. MOST HOTELS WILL BE CLOSED FOR SEVERAL MONTHS FOR REPAIRS, MEANING THAT MANY SERVICE INDUSTRY PEOPLE NOT DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN RECONSTRUCTION WILL BE WITHOUT EMPLOYMENT.

INFRASTRUCTURE DAMAGE

16. IN ADDITION TO THE DAMAGE TO DOMESTIC RESIDENCES, THE BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE HAS RECEIVED MAJOR DAMAGE. SERVICES WHICH ARE TOTALLY OR PARTIALLY DISRUPTED CURRENTLY INCLUDE: LANDLINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ALONG THE COAST, ELECTRICITY SERVICES, GOODS DELIVERY, MAIL AND POSTAL SERVICES, GARBAGE PICKUP AND DISPOSAL, AND LOCAL BUS TRANSPORTATION. RAIL TRANSPORTATION IS STOPPED AND WILL REQUIRE TOTAL RECONSTRUCTION BEFORE OPERATIONS MAY RESUME.

17. ALTHOUGH A FULL INVENTORY OF PUBLIC SECTOR DAMAGE WAS NOT AVAILABLE, THERE ARE REPORTS OF MANY COASTAL SCHOOLS WHICH HAVE BEEN DAMAGED OR DESTROYED, AND OTHER NON-DAMAGED SCHOOLS ARE SERVING AS RELIEF CENTERS. REPORTS INDICATE MANY PUBLIC SECTOR OFFICIALS ALSO LOST THEIR LIVES IN THE TSUNAMI. THESE INDICATE THAT IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT SCHOOL WILL NOT RESUME FOR COASTAL CHILDREN AS SCHEDULED ON JANUARY 5, 2005.

COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

18. FROM THE COMPARISON OF NOTES FROM BOTH ASSESSMENT TEAMS, AS WELL AS DISCUSSIONS WITH OTHER TEAMS VISITING OTHER COASTAL AREAS, IT IS CLEAR THAT THERE IS SIGNIFICANT COMMONALITY ABOUT THE NATURE, SCALE, AND DEGREE OF HUMAN IMPACT AND PHYSICAL DESTRUCTION ALONG THE COAST OF SRI LANKA. THE MOST SIGNIFICANT POINTS TO BE DRAWN ABOUT THE CURRENT SITUATION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1A. HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE DISPLACED FROM THEIR HOMES DUE TO PARTIAL OR TOTAL DESTRUCTION AND THE VAST MAJORITY ARE STAYING AT LOCAL RELIEF CENTERS (TEMPLES, CHURCHES, ETC.).

1B. THERE IS AN OUTPOURING OF LOCAL AND PRIVATE SECTOR SPONSORED RELIEF ASSISTANCE WHICH IS MEETING THE IMMEDIATE NEEDS OF THE DISPLACED FOR FOOD, WATER, AND MEDICINE.

1C. UNMET NEEDS OF THE DISPLACED POPULATION INCLUDE SHELTERING MATERIALS, WATER SUPPLY CONTAINERS, HOUSEHOLD ITEMS, AND MOSQUITO NETS.

1D. THE SANITATION SERVICES OF NEARLY ALL RELIEF CENTERS ARE GROSSLY INADEQUATE, AND LACK OF PROPER SANITATION MAY LIKELY CONTRIBUTE TO POTENTIAL OUTBREAKS OF DIARRHEA, RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS, AND OTHER INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

1E. THE GOVERNMENT OF SRI LANKA AT BOTH NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVELS APPEARS TO BE STRETCHED TO THE BREAKING POINT TO COPE WITH BOTH THE SCALE OF THE DISASTER AND THE INFLUX OF RELIEF AGENCIES AND SUPPLIES.

1F. INTERMEDIATE AND LONGER TERMS SOLUTIONS TO THE SITUATION OF DISPLACEMENT MUST INVOLVE REBUILDING OF KEY PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE, RECONSTRUCTION OF HOMES AND DWELLINGS, WATER QUALITY SERVICES TO PUMP OUT SALINATED WELLS, AND REHABILITATION ASSISTANCE TO KEY ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES SUCH AS FISHING.

1G. GIVEN THE EMOTIONAL STATE OF SO MANY COASTAL RESIDENTS WHO SUFFERED LOSS OF FAMILY MEMBERS AND HOMES, AS WELL AS SURVIVAL EXPERIENCES, IT IS RECOMMENDED TO HAVE PSYCHO-SOCIAL GRIEF AND TRAUMA COUNSELING SERVICES AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

